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Contents

	Page
The Charisma From God	289
The Christian Reformed Church In Perspective	291
Do They Know The Score?	295
Purpose Of The Book: God-Centered Living	298
Clarence Bouma On "The Relevance Of Calvinism For Today"	299
H. H. Meeter On "Books On Calvinism And Calvinistic Action"	306
Henry J. Ryskamp On "Calvinistic Action And Modern Economic Patterns"	307

The Charisma From God

The word *charisma* (pronounced ka ris′ ma) will be important in this and later issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. Unless readers learn what we mean by the word, they will not understand the significance of what is written. The full meaning of the word will be developed in several successive issues. *Charisma* is sometimes written *charism* (kar′ ism); the meaning is the same.

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The dictionary defines *charisma* as "a gift or power bestowed by the Holy Spirit for use in the propagation of the truth, or the edification of the church."

When the question is asked who have in history been recipients of such charisma, certain obvious instances come to mind, namely, Moses, the Old Testament prophets, the apostles in the New Testament, those present at Pentecost, and finally especially the Apostle John in the Apocalypse (last book in the New Testament).

Our interest, however, will lie in modern instances in which Christian Reformed and other churchmen apparently believe that a charisma of some sort operates even in the twentieth century.

Some may doubt that there is actually extensive belief today in a charisma, a gift or power by God. However, we believe we shall be able to make clear that in reality a pervasive belief in modern charisma exists.

This belief in modern charisma is not on the surface of praxeological (social, political and economic) events, nor is it explicitly stated, nor is it an avowed modern doctrine. It is instead something that is assumed and taken for granted.

A comparison may help. Socialists declare all economic *value* to be the product of labor; many capitalists have a similar idea. A lot of labor on a house or a machine, means that there will be a high value on the house or machine; and vice versa. However, the idea that labor produces value is wholly erroneous. Behind the scenes there are two factors which are the real explanation of economic value — *demand* and *scarcity*. Without these two characteristics nothing has economic value. Value does not derive, as it appears to do, from labor, but from demand and scarcity.

Similarly, churchmen call attention to some factors in society which *appear* to be an explanation of their principles for society, but behind their apparent explanation there is basically a belief on their part in a modern charisma—something coming from God.

That belief, we believe, should be challenged, because that charisma which they assume always involves violation of the revealed will of God. When PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM sees such a

conflict and consequently is on the horns of the dilemma of choosing for confidence in charisma versus confidence in the Law of God, then it relies on the Law of God.

Obedience to the Law of God, in our estimation, is more than any alleged or assumed charisma. fn

The Christian Reformed Church In Perspective

It is difficult to appraise objectively an institution of which one is a part, for example, the Christian Reformed church. But the accomplishment of that is undoubtedly profitable, particularly if the purpose is to promote the denomination's future effectiveness. What, indeed, is the Christian Reformed church when it is looked at *objectively?*

It is a denomination 99 years old. It was organized by foreigners, Netherlanders. It is still somewhat foreign; many of its leaders and people continue to look to the Netherlands for religious leadership, as a devout Mohammedan prays facing toward Mecca. In order to advance to high position in the church, attendance at the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands is even today considered helpful.

For the first three-fourths of its existence the Christian Reformed church may be considered to have been fairly solidaire (unified). In the last fourth of its existence there has developed within it a steadily widening division of opinion. The adjective, *Christian Reformed,* cannot today be applied to its 175,000 souls and be indicated to mean a prevailing genuine unity within the denomination. Furthermore, the denomination is becoming too big to be cozy. As all things that grow big, its affairs must progressively become more impersonal. (See September 1956 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 283-286.)

In recent years some members have become more and more sensitive to ideas in the world around them. Ideas from the outside have begun to penetrate their minds deeply. Those members have in many cases developed a really different set of ideas for Christian Reformed Calvinists. Those new (borrowed) ideas are in the field of doctrine, church organization, and ethics. We hap-

pen to be especially interested in these new ethics. They consist essentially in the *ethics* of the social gospel, as developed by Walter Rauschenbush, and as promoted today by Reinhold Niebuhr and G. Bromley Oxnam and others, and by the World Council of Churches. These members whose ethics are similar to the ethics of the social gospel may be called the "radicals" in the denomination. (We do not here use the term "radicals" in an either favorable or unfavorable sense.)

The other segment of the denomination has remained, shall we say, inert. In the formative years of the people who today constitute the mature people in this denomination, Abraham Kuyper of the Netherlands, theologian and politician, played a great rôle and determined the general cast of their ideas. Kuyper's views had a significant characteristic, namely, they were orthodox and devout in expression, but at the same time they basically shifted ground to several new and dubious positions. The sedate and restrained followers of Abraham Kuyper may be designated as the "inert conservatives" in the denomination. They do not know that Abraham Kuyper taught a social doctrine different from the traditional Calvinist one.

Division will, we believe, continue to develop between the "radicals" and the "conservatives." In one sense it is a real division. The conservatives distrust the radicals, and the radicals are disgusted with the naiveté of the conservatives.

But in another sense, it is a sham division, a no more real struggle than the exercises on a parade ground. The reason for this is that Kuyper's *principles* in regard to ethics were basically similar to the ethics of the social gospel as developed in this country. Kuyper merely did not go so far in his *conclusions* on ethics as the social gospel proposes; his *premises,* however, went all the way. The conservatives have not fully realized that their premises (in so far as they pertain to Kuyperian ethics) betray their supposedly conservative position. They cannot dispute successfully, because the *logic* of the radicals is consistent with their premises, but the logic of the conservatives is not. There will never be a logical conservative ethical position in the denomination until the ethical premises of Kuyper are re-examined, reappraised and, as we are sure they should be, rejected.

Kuyper's position on *ethics* is out of harmony with traditional Calvinism, if Max Weber's description of Calvinism, as given in last month's PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is correct, as we believe it is correct. The nontraditionalism in Kuyper's ethical ideas is not really debatable. We all lack insight to realize easily what the *unstated* premises of certain doctrines may be, but anybody can see the eventual *consequences* of ideas. What are the consequences of Kuyper's ideas? The answer to this may be found in the present-day disintegration of the political, social and economic ideas in the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, and the spiritual disorder that the party manifests. This disintegration can be ascribed to the character of Kuyper's ethical principles, which have fermented through the Anti-Revolutionary Party as yeast in dough.

It is important to note that what this party is today is not appraised, by those who speak for the party, as deviating from Kuyper. Consider Smeenk's book, *In Kuyper's Lijn,* (in the Kuyper tradition or line) which develops the idea that the present program of the Anti-Revolutionary Party is indeed in harmony with the teaching of the master.

In number of members the Christian Reformed church is growing, as the expression goes, "like a weed." This is a biological growth, the birth rate. Very few new members are obtained by the denomination from the outside. Externally, the denomination has in fact always been nonfertile. Internally, the growth should not be measured by birth rate but by spiritual characteristics and ideological vigor. This is hard to measure. In regard to ideological vigor, one might go into a congregation and select five men and women at random, between the ages of 25 and 30 years, and give them a written examination, avoiding, however, the customary denominational "passwords" which would give a clue to the correct answers. The majority of the answers might disappoint those who believe that the denomination will continue to have a traditional or virile Calvinist hold on the generation coming into maturity and influence. Certainly, that hold will not be on the basic ideas of Calvinism in its heyday in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Members in the denomination disclaim that they are Fundamentalist. That unwanted description is endeavored to be fended

off in part by a special device, namely, by the acceptance of the social gospel in the fields of ethics and group action. (We shall submit evidence in the next issue.) One phase of an objective description of the denomination is that some of its members profess *theological* doctrines historically known as Calvinist, and that they actually are drifting steadily toward the *ethical* doctrines known as the social gospel. They do not, however, advance those ethical ideas as being practically the whole content of religion as the social gospel advocates do.

Returning to the idea of denominational nonfertility in getting new outside members, the radio program of the Christian Reformed church has, naturally, satisfied some non-Christian Reformed listeners who would be satisfied with any orthodox religious program, but it has turned out to be somewhat as a program of a company which engages in a big national advertising program, but fails to get the increased sales needed to justify the expense of the advertising. To any experienced merchandising executive the tactical deficiencies of this promotion program are obvious.

The significant question in the circumstances is: *Why* has the Christian Reformed church always been nonfertile externally in regard to getting new members, and why is it possible that it may be becoming spiritually sterile internally?

Our answer will in general be that the cause is intellectual confusion among members in regard to certain Biblical doctrines. Intellectually, the members of the denomination emit an uncertain sound. Not only are some of the members confused in regard to various subjects, but the ideas they hold lack intellectual respectability and consequently can never be convincing. The confusion arises (1) from there being an unsatisfactory content to the idea of living to the "glory of God"; the term is frequently only a cliché; and (2) from there being a new definition substituted for "brotherly love" in place of the traditional Calvinist definition.

In short, the First Table of the Law lacks modern meaning (relevance), and the Second Table of the Law is in reality subverted by some members in the Christian Reformed church.

Let us examine available strands of evidence. fn

Do They Know The Score?

Several years ago a visiting friend looked at us quizzically, and asked, "Why do you challenge those people?" To that question we answered, "Because they are wrong and their influence is harmful."

"But," he said, "I think you misunderstand. Those people are not deliberately wrong; they do not know any better. They have never heard the arguments against their position. Why not then approach them educationally rather than argumentatively?"

That friend's idea has frequently recurred to us; we believed at that time that he was mistaken, but we have gradually come to wonder whether he might be right after all.

Not long thereafter we were talking with an able man influential in the supervision of Calvin College. We did not reveal what our line-of-argument would be, which resulted in his acting cautiously toward us and defensively. We asked exploratory questions in regard to educational matters in the denomination. But it was impossible to make progress. He would not answer queries. We "got the brush off"; we were told: "There is not anyone there who really knows what the score is." The subject was changed on us, and that is that.

Recently we set about examining a book published in 1951, entitled *God-Centered Living, or Calvinism In Action* (The Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan).* This book is a symposium; there are fourteen authors, each contributing a chapter.

We have read the articles by the following authors:

1. Dr. Clarence Bouma, "The Relevance of Calvinism For Today"

*We thank the Baker Book House for permission to quote. They have informed us to our disappointment that this book is out-of-print. Although we are in substantial disagreement with some ideas in some of the essays in this book, we recommend to readers that they endeavor to obtain secondhand copies. It is an unsound self-education policy to read only one interpretation of moot present-day problems. We review books which are significant either because of their merits or their demerits. The authors of the various essays have concentrated many ideas in the brief compass of their respective essays. Quotations in this review are too limited to reveal the full scope of those essays.

2. Rev. Peter Van Tuinen, "The Task of the Church for the Solution of Modern Problems"
3. Dr. William Harry Jellema, "Calvinism and Higher Education"
4. Dr. William Spoelhof, "Calvinism and Political Action"
5. Dr. Henry J. Ryskamp, "Calvinist Action and Modern Economic Patterns."
6. J. Herman Fles, "Calvinism and Contemporary Business Endeavor."
7. Dr. Garrett Heyns, "Calvinism and Social Problems"
8. Dr. Amry Vanden Bosch, "Calvinism and International Relations"
9. Dr. H. Henry Meeter, "Books on Calvinism and Calvinist Action"

After reading these articles our doubt has decreased whether the two friends with whom we talked, as we just mentioned, might be right.

The contributors to *God-Centered Living* whose names we have listed* are former students of Calvin College. Presumably the "Calvinism" that they profess is the Calvinism taught at the school. They do not declare that what they write is different from what they may have heard while at Calvin College; they present their ideas as the quintessence of Calvinism and the optimum of orthodoxy. Several of the men mentioned were or are connected with the school: Bouma was in the theological school; Spoelhof is president of the college; Jellema heads the philosophy department; Ryskamp, the economics-sociology department; Meeter has just retired from the Bible department.

In what follows in this issue we shall briefly examine the contributions of Bouma, Meeter and Ryskamp. The ideas of the others we shall summarize later, if the opportunity presents itself.

*Nothing here written pertains to any of the articles in *God-Centered Living* which are not here listed. We have not read (as of this time) the other articles.

Eventually, readers should be able to understand clearly what our answer is to the question: Why is the Christian Reformed church ideologically a nonfertile church externally, despite its biological virility and muliebrity internally?

We re-submit the idea, in this instance in connection with the 100th anniversary (in 1957) of the Christian Reformed church, that it should give serious attention to Machiavelli's great advice, namely (our italics):

> There is nothing more true than that all things of this world have a limit to their existence; but those only run the entire course ordained for them by Heaven that do not allow their body to become disorganized, but keep it in the manner ordained, or if they change, so do it that it shall be for their advantage, and not to their injury. . . . And those are the best constituted bodies, and have the longest existence, which possess the intrinsic means of *frequently renewing themselves;* . . . and the means of renewing them is to *bring them back to their original principles.* . . . All religious republics. . . must have within themselves some goodness, by means of which they obtain their first growth and reputation, and as in the process of time *this goodness becomes corrupted,* it will of necessity destroy the body unless something intervenes to bring it back to its normal condition.

In regard to prevailing ideas of some Christian Reformed members, it may be argued: (1) that their goodness is becoming corrupted; (2) that the church will of necessity eventually be destroyed, unless (3) it renews itself, by (4) returning to its original principles.

The title of the book we are looking at sounds devout—*God-Centered Living or Calvinism in Action.* The further description is, "A Symposium by the Calvinistic Action Committee." We would not be welcome on the Committee, nor would we be willing to join. We find ourselves unable to become enthusiastic about this Calvinistic Action Committee. Its program reminds us of the programs of the Social Action groups in other denominations, which groups are obviously working on the propagation of the Social Gospel. fn

Purpose Of The Book: God-Centered Living

The *Foreword* to this book signed by the Calvinistic Action Committee begins as follows:

> This book seeks to be of help to those who desire to know what the will of God is for the practical guidance of their lives in the complex relations and situations of our modern day.

In regard to several of the contributions in the book we are unable to accept the proposition that it consistently outlines the "will of God" or what is written is useful for "practical guidance." Our views are to the contrary. We do not advise reading *God-Centered Living* in order to find out what the "will of God" is.

The Committee cannot take offense at our independent and unfortunately unfavorable view, because of its own disavowal:

> Naturally the reader will appraise each chapter in the light of his own convictions and his own peculiar interests. He must realize that the Calvinistic Action Committee does not express any opinions of its own, but that the Committee has felt that each chapter is a challenge, and a beginning to a progressive and dynamic Calvinism in a chartless age.

Our view is that part of what is written in *God-Centered Living* is reactionary and degenerative rather than "progressive or dynamic" Calvinism, and is itself "chartless" or worse.

We are simply stating the issue between two radically different views, Old and Progressive Calvinism on the one hand and modern "Calvinism" as outlined in *God-Centered Living* on the other hand.

There are various devotional and religious *sentiments* expressed in the essays in *God-Centered Living*, which are all very fine; but we are challenging the underlying *principles*. fn

Clarence Bouma On "The Relevance Of Calvinism For Today"

Dr. Bouma's contribution to *God-Centered Living* is introductory to the others and serves that purpose excellently. As is also true of the other contributions the literary style is admirable. The contributors generally polished their contributions with the consequence that the articles make smooth reading.

Bouma (1) defines Calvinism, (2) outlines the potential of Calvinism for practical ethics, and (3) discusses how this task is to be achieved. The third is, obviously, the important subject for this book.

In a broad way we do not take exception to what Bouma wrote, but we shall comment on Bouma's article under the following headings:

1. Abraham Kuyper and Bouma
2. The social *struggle*
3. Bouma and the "Glory of God"
4. Bouma in the Kuyperian ruts
5. The *Doleantie* versus the *Secession*

Abraham Kuyper And Bouma

Imagine a thief who in daylight has robbed an isolated house on a highway with a garden in the rear sloping down to a deep river. Imagine, too, that on the night before the robbery there has been a heavy rain.

In the afternoon the owner returns and finds his house robbed. Being calculating he disturbs nothing; he acts to preserve all clues. He finds the rear door open and then he sees the thief's footsteps in the mud in the garden. He follows them to the river's edge, where they end. Obviously, the thief had walked in the river for some distance to throw off pursuers.

The householder goes up and down the river bank. He repeats the process, going farther each time. But nowhere do the

footsteps of the thief emerge from the river. Finally, in despair the householder gives up.

The fact is, however, that the thief never entered the river. He walked backward carefully step by step and left by the front driveway. The clues left by the thief hindered rather than helped pursuit.

Similarly, ethical questions are problems. Abraham Kuyper had a solution for those problems. His solutions, too, led to the water's edge. And then the trail disappears. Many, including Bouma, have been following Kuyper to the water's edge. The solution they think is along Kuyperian lines of guild socialism* or interventionism,** and common grace, and sphere sovereignty. But what if all those clues are in the wrong direction? It is our belief that whoever follows them will continually be running distractedly up and down the river's edge. Finally, completely frustrated, he will give up.

The unfortunate effect of Kuyper's big footsteps is that they have handicapped further development of Reformed ethical theory. His path has a dead-end—the deep river. Kuyper has had, we regret to believe, a stultifying effect on a whole half-century of the Calvinism which followed in his steps. Anyone, who as Bouma has a penetrating and ambitious mind, wishes to progress beyond or build further than Kuyper. But that is an impossibility; Kuyper's intellectual structure was built on too weak a foundation.

No worthy ideas have been built by anyone on the Kuyperian intellectual concepts. Kuyper's ideas have been repeated. But nothing new has been added. It is a great misfortune that Calvinists have had their attention so fixed on Kuyperian concepts that they cannot escape their toils.

The ethico-socio-economic ideas of Kuyper long frustrated all our thinking. Fortunately, we escaped from them.

The Social Struggle

Bouma, as does nearly everybody, views life as a *struggle between men* rather than a *struggle to keep the Law of God.* This

*See June 1955 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 170-172.
**See June 1955 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 172-173.

is a grave error based on a metaphor, namely that life is a battle. Bouma writes (our italics):

> Life in all its modern ramifications presents a *genuine battle,* a *struggle,* a *warfare.* The unusual intensification of the *social struggle* is caused by a number of factors, all of them characteristic of the modern *structure* of society.

The metaphor that life is a natural *warfare,* is misleading and the explanation that the *structure* and *complexity* of society *cause* that warfare is an error.

The "interdependence" of men is here considered by Bouma to be a cause for social strife. The reverse is correct. The interdependence of men is the cause of social cohesion. That natural interdependence and cohesion is disturbed by disobedience to the Law of God. *There* is where the warfare is, and not in the interdependence.

Bouma extends this to international matters, but again it is not international interdependence that causes "warfare," but violation of the commandments of God.

Bouma does correctly appraise the really important ethico-politico-socio-economic issue of the day, namely, the issue between the principles of socialism and the principles of Scripture. On this subject we completely agree with him.

Bouma On The Glory Of God

> Bouma wrote: "Let us be on our guard lest we speak glibly of the 'glory of God.' Let us be on our guard, lest it deteriorate into an empty phrase." The warning he gives is, we believe, in order.

Bouma In The Kuyperian Ruts

The high mark of Bouma's program is outlined in the section on how to achieve the task of making Calvinism relevant to modern life. Here he follows Kuyper as accurately as Ben Hur in the great chariot race followed the rival Roman charioteer, Messala;

—when they had both passed there was only one set of wheel tracks. The track that Bouma follows consists of Kuyper's ideas on

1. common grace;
2. antithesis;
3. sphere sovereignty.*

Common Grace

1. What we have in "common" with all men is *common grace* according to Bouma. Of course, we have sun and rain, food and shelter, conversation, and what have you, all in common with all men. What of it? What does such an idea reveal? Common grace is in reality only another term for natural and social laws or the providence of God. Why not leave it with that. Why call it a great and new profound idea—common grace? Why imagine that *common grace* is one of the three great tools or principles to promote Calvinism in the United States? Why not simply analyze natural, social and economic laws? Giving those a new name is no contribution to the welfare of society. What is there in a name?**

The Antithesis

2. But over against what we have in *common* with all men is the *antithesis,* the difference and lack of agreement between believers and unbelievers, that is, what we do not have in common. This term, *antithesis,* is another word that is a substitute for thought, except that in this case antithesis has come to mean primarily separate *organization* of "believers" from "nonbelievers." For us the *antithesis* is no mystery, and no new idea. Instead of trying to sell the antithesis idea throughout the United States, why not set out to promote the real thing, namely, *observance by self and others of the law of God in the world.* That is all the real meaning that the *antithesis* has in regard to practical *action,* which is what Bouma is talking about

Progressive Calvinism cannot afford to promote this inferior antithesis idea. We are instead promoters of the Law of God.

*For meaning of term, sphere sovereignty, see February 1956 issue, pages 51-55.

***Common grace* has many meanings. We are using the meaning as determined by Bouma's context in this article.

Sphere Sovereignty

3. Finally, Bouma picks up Kuyper's idea of *sphere sovereignty*. This is a most unfortunate term. It should be sphere *freedom*. We are wholly in favor of sphere freedom. But that freedom does not rest for us on *sphere* sovereignty; if there is sovereignty in the sphere, there must be an antecedent *personal* sovereignty. There must be more sovereignty in men than in spheres. The sphere is nothing more than an area of joint but still personal action. The mental abstraction, a sphere, is not a reality in the sense that it can have, in its own mystic and conceptual self, any sovereignty.

The spheres were not "created" by God but by men. The presumed sovereignty of the sphere does not come directly from God but is always exercised *through men*. If the men do not establish the sphere, there is no sphere. If a sphere is created by men, it derives its sovereignty at the most *through* men. The only sense in which there is sphere sovereignty directly *from God* is that everything occurs under the providence of God. This, of course, is not a practical idea, but a theoretical generality, perfectly true, but no practical conclusion can be deduced from it.

The tragedy consists in this; that the idea of sphere sovereignty results in a failure to see the antecedent *individual* sovereignty, which is the sovereignty that counts. Surely, the wonderful independence of voluntary human associations, the spheres, from governmental domination is of cardinal importance. But all the sovereignties so prominent in Kuyper's mind—governmental or sphere—derive *through* one source only, namely, men. Any government, sphere or man operating contrary to the law of God has *no sovereignty derived from God* for perpetrating that wrong act.

What we have just written has merit, we are sure, when compared with Kuyper's sphere sovereignty; we have here contrasted *sphere* sovereignty with *individual* sovereignty. That comparison is practically forced upon us by Kuyper's unfortunate thought structure. But actually we do not believe in *personal* sovereignty. A human being is not important enough to be *sovereign*. He is, unhappily, too depraved to be *sovereign*. Then it might be concluded that we believe only in the sovereignty of God. That is correct.

But that idea is in a sense abstract. How get it down to earth? Very simply: *sovereignty* on this little earthly ball, floating as a dust speck in immeasurable space, derives from the LAW of God. Whatever is done *according to that Law* is sovereign—valid and imprescriptible. Whatever is contrary to that Law of God is not sovereign, is invalid, and has no right of existence though approved by a man, by men, by spheres, by government, by judges, princes, kings, emperors, potentates, dictators. In the sense just defined all *sovereignty* resides in God and thence in the LAW he has made.

The whole thought scaffolding of Abraham Kuyper disfigures his structure of ideas for Calvinism.

It has for long seemed unwise to us for Americans of Dutch ancestry to promote to sophisticated Americans the somewhat vague Kuyperian ideas of common grace, the antithesis, and sphere sovereignty. Why not, if the ideas are to be promoted, stay with what Americans will readily understand, towit:

These Ideas	*And Not These Ideas*
1. Natural laws and the providence of God.	Common grace
2. Obedience to law of God.	Antithesis
3. Freedom and responsibility of individual in group action.	Sphere sovereignty

Kuyper's peculiar ideas have no new relevance for America today. But they are, unfortunately, the very ideas which Bouma proposes as the contribution that Calvinism of Dutch origin can make to America.

It is to be hoped fervently that the Centennial Anniversary of the Christian Reformed church in 1957 will not be marred by new drum-beating for Kuyperian ideas, even though those ideas appear repeatedly in this book put out by the Calvinistic Action Committee. These ideas of common grace, antithesis and sphere

sovereignty all involve inferior understanding of the real ideas and utilize terms which hinder rather than help understanding.

The Doleantie Versus The Secession

From the foregoing some readers may erroneously reach the conclusion that we are thinking in terms of unhinging Christian Reformed Calvinism from its Dutch background. That inference is incorrect.

Calvinists in America of Dutch origin are mostly descendents either of those who participated with Kuyper in the *Doleantie* in 1886, or of those who participated in the Secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834. If the Christian Reformed church wishes to return to an earlier Dutch thought movement, let it consider the Secession. Although Groen van Prinsterer, a contemporary of the Secession, was not formally a Secessionist, he was, in our opinion, a far sounder guide for modern Calvinists than the leader of the Doleantie. If we must have a Dutch *führer* or an *il duce* let it be Groen rather than Kuyper.

That the Secession was a linsey-woolsey movement must be admitted. That it had strong pietistic elements must also be admitted. But it should be recognized that in its simplicity there was strength. The attempted effort to introduce "culture" into the Doleantie (an attempt of which the Secession was free) did not, in our opinion, add something which can ever be sold to Americans. Certainly, in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we cannot accept "Kuyperian culture." Anyone advancing today with Kuyperian ideas is like Victor Hugo's Napoleon after the battle of Waterloo. In the darkening evening of the third day after the battle was hopelessly lost, a man, according to Hugo, was found advancing again. It was Napoleon, "mighty somnambulist* of a vanished dream." The Calvinistic Action Committee are somnambulists, too.

That Kuyper made great contributions to the Reformed churches is not disputed. His contribution, however, consisted in something other than what is emphasized in Bouma's article. fn

*Sleep walker.

H. H. Meeter On "Books On Calvinism And Calvinistic Action"

Dr. Meeter has compiled an extensive bibliography of books on Calvin, Calvinism, Calvinistic conferences, etc., which appears as an appendix to *God-Centered Living*. Meeter has not undertaken to evaluate these books. If that had been done, the *Appendix* would be more valuable.

However, any appraisal of books in this list would, if the appraisal were to have value, necessarily be highly critical.

In the list, for example, is R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. This book is, it is true, about Calvinism, but the question is, what kind of book—favorable or unfavorable, reasonably objective or propagandistic. At Calvin College this book is considered history with worthy objectivity. We view the book differently. Tawney is a socialist who wished to throw doubt on the idea that Calvinism could *properly* nurture capitalism. Tawney wants religion to nurture socialism. As historically Calvinism has nurtured capitalism, it became necessary for Tawney to select quotations showing that Puritans and other Calvinists had conscience problems about capitalism. All this is very subtly done by Tawney. In fact, it is not realized at Calvin what Tawney is doing. (See September 1956 issue, pages 265-269.) We object to this biased propagandistic book being on Meeter's list without any warning as to its character.

In our estimation one of the greatest dangers to the Christian Reformed church is the prospective success of the program of Tawney, of the social gospel advocates, and of the World Council of Churches, etc., to sell to members of the Christian Reformed church the idea that morality and Christianity require the acceptance of the principles of socialism, specifically, its principle in regard to *brotherly love*. In various quarters in the Christian Reformed church that idea seems to have been accepted. Meeter's book list can unintentionally contribute to this trend.

On the list, of course, is Kuyper's Stone Lectures on *Calvinism* given at Princeton University. No comment is made on these either, which is understandable. We have had an experience in connection with these Lectures which disturbed us at the time.

We were talking to a young American several years ago. For some reason he had occasion to refer to these Stone Lectures. He said: "I have read them. They are valueless. They really do not tell you anything." He made additional stronger criticism which we shall forbear to repeat. The remarks struck us as a blow in the face.

We then re-examined those Stone Lectures and concluded that the young man was right. Lectures as the Stone Lectures at Princeton presumably will add something new to the body of knowledge of the subjects discussed. These Lectures fail to do that. They are old ideas with variations in terminology.

In the years immediately ahead there may be a resurgence of promotion of Dutch books on Calvinism and of current ideas of Calvinists in the Netherlands. Meeter himself has written a book on Calvinism which reports modern Calvinistic thought in the Netherlands. He accepts that modern thought as being in the Calvinist tradition. That estimate of his differs from ours. Some modern Calvinism in the Netherlands is not reconcilable with the spirit of Calvinism in its great days, but is modern Interventionism borrowed from the "world" and contrary to the teachings of Scripture. fn

Henry J. Ryskamp On "Calvinistic Action And Modern Economic Patterns"

Professor Ryskamp follows Abraham Kuyper along lines different from Bouma, but he follows Kuyper nevertheless.

When Bouma followed Kuyper on *common grace, antithesis* and *sphere sovereignty,* he was following Kuyper on ideas which would affect the promotional merits of the ethical phases of the gospel message. For example, if the antithesis is to be an important idea in the approach to nonbelievers, then there is a note of hostility and arrogance in the message; we are in and you are out. The whole tone changes when the emphasis is not on the contrast, the antithesis, but on obeying the Law of God. To our mind the *ethical* phase of the Christian message is covered far better by

stressing the Law of God rather than the antithesis. The "psychology" of the idea of the antithesis is bad and not promotional.

Bouma is a theologian and his emphasis on three ideas affecting the spread of the gospel is natural for him. Ryskamp is a social scientist, a praxeologist, a man who deals with questions of human action rather than the gospel message. In this field of human action, or praxeology, he follows Kuyper on the subjects of interventionism and the existence of a charisma. These are, as we view them, two dangerous subjects. It is not to be denied that Ryskamp has the backing of Kuyperian ideas on these subjects. But he is also essentially in harmony with Tawney, and Keynes, and the social gospelers, and the World Council of Churches. He is, in fact, perfectly in harmony with the spirit of the world around us today. It is that spirit cloaked with certain ethical and religious externals which he offers. We consider the substance to be far more important than the externals.

What we outline in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM in regard to the Law of God puts us diametrically opposed to the prevailing worldly climate of thought. There is an antithesis, but it is a *result* and not a manner of approach or an attitude.

The ideas which will be examined in what follows are the ideas of Abraham Kuyper, Ryskamp, Tawney, Keynes, the social gospelers, the social actionists of the churches, and the World Council of Churches. On praxeological subjects all these people are fairly well agreed. No one believing that the World Council of Churches has a good praxeological program will disagree with Ryskamp either. We agree with neither Ryskamp nor the World Council.

Ryskamp in praxeology is in the same rut that Bouma landed in in theology. Ryskamp has been conditioned to accept Kuyperian ideas to such an extent that he has not been fortunate enough to get onto an entirely different track of ideas. One of the unfortunate features of education in the Christian Reformed church is that some person becomes an *authority* so that his ideas substitute for scriptural and scientific ideas. Some devout and maybe uninformed man is considered so great an *authority* that everyone follows him.

When Ryskamp is following *authorities* there is nothing unusual about that. Practically everybody is doing the same thing.

Ryskamp Essentially Agrees With Max Weber

In the preceding issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we summarized Max Weber's view of the relationship between Calvinism and capitalism. We acted merely as reporters of Weber's views. Ryskamp goes further and essentially agrees with Weber. He writes as follows on page 182; italics by Ryskamp:

> Whereas Calvin exhorted his readers and followers to serve God *through* their vocations, Luther was content with the idea that men should not neglect to serve God *in* their vocations, which, it seems, he regarded as burdens to be borne in this world. Calvin dignified the occupations of all workers as "callings," divine callings. It was this idea, that each individual had a God-given vocation, that contributed to the burst of energy that characterized the period identified with the development of capitalism. This new activity and increased productivity may be attributed to the fact also that Calvin exhorted the Christian to own Jesus Christ as his Lord not only in his religious or ecclesiastical life, but especially in his everyday relationships, particularly in his daily work. The idea that one's work is God-given and that one must seek to serve God actively in and through his work, undoubtedly contributed to the new dynamic that stirred the western world.

Although Ryskamp is willing that much of the credit for the good in the Industrial Revolution and capitalism go to Calvinism, he declares that the defects in capitalism are from other sources. He writes on page 183 (our italics):

> . . . some writers have claimed that Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, was the major influence in the concurrence of events that led to the development of capitalism *and its attendant evils.* This conclusion has, however, been challenged by others, both Calvinist and non-Calvinist writers. These writers point to the fact that changes

> had been occurring which gradually brought on the new order of economic relationships. They emphasize what is now generally recognized to be true, that the *radical individualism,* the *rationalism,* and the *deism* which were developing in the period preceding the industrial revolution were largely responsible for the thinking upon which the economic philosophy, used to support *laissez-faire* individualism, was based.

We are unsympathetic to relieving Calvinism of responsibility for any of the alleged evils of capitalism. We consider Calvinism to be far more responsible for those evils than so-called *radical individualism,* or *rationalism,* or *deism.* We wish to comment very briefly on these three subjects.

1. Firstly, in regard to individualism: PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is itself what Ryskamp calls "radically individualist." We do not consider the evils of the world to be the result of radical individualism, but of something quite different, namely, disobedience to the commands of God. (See June 1955, PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 162-166.)

2. Secondly, we are not "rationalists" in the meaning of the eighteenth century term, but we believe that what is good logic is also good morality. We are opposed to contrasting reason and morality, or reason and Christianity. Earlier Ryskamp had written (our italics):

> For the economic liberal the active agent in economic life was the individual guided by *enlightened self-interest,* the individual guided by *reason, not necessarily by moral or religious standards.*

Ryskamp obviously believes in a conflict in practical matters between reason and morality. This idea we consider to be at variance with what Scripture teaches. Nor do we believe that the Christian religion should have a millstone around its neck which consists in the idea that in practical affairs religious standards are not "rational" in a proper sense of the term. We concur with Macaulay when he wrote the great words:

> *The principles of morality and far-sighted judgment are identical.*

When reason and Christian ethics are contrasted as Ryskamp contrasts them, the acceptability of Christianity is unnecessarily lessened.

3. Thirdly, a relationship is alleged between deism and the evils "attendant on capitalism." We are not deists, but the evils of capitalism in our opinion do not stem primarily from deism, but from disobedience to the commands of God. In old-fashioned language the evils of capitalism are plain sins against the Ten Commandments. Those sins ought to be mentioned without mincing words. We shall see later whether Ryskamp mentions those sins, or whether anyone else contributing to this symposium specifically mentions them.

Ryskamp's Principles; Are They Moral, Biblical And Economic?

So much in a preliminary way. Our criticism regarding Ryskamp's ideas becomes progressively more grave. Ryskamp professes doctrines which we are unable to appraise as moral, or Biblical or economic.

We believe that we are correct when we make that appraisal. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that his article contains inconsistencies which make it confusing to know what his real position is. He reasons circularly. This is his circular path.

1. Capitalism developed, in part, out of Calvinism.
2. The bad in capitalism stems from other causes than Calvinism.
3. The bad in capitalism needs to be corrected.
4. The agency to correct these evils is the state.
5. The state may take both positive action to promote the good and negative action to restrain the evil.
6. Nevertheless the state may not destroy individual initiative or personality, and the individual must correct the evils that exist.
7. And so the state is not finally the agency to correct evils after all.

In short, Ryskamp contradicts himself.

First Ryskamp gives some praise to capitalism. Next, he admits that the purposes of socialism and communism are to correct evils in capitalism. But socialism and communism must not be employed. The correct agency is an *interventionist government.* Ryskamp ascribes this great insight of favoring interventionism to "Abraham Kuyper and others." Ryskamp is, therefore, definitely an interventionist, but . . . but . . . interventionism can be bad . . . and . . . and needs to be carefully administered; otherwise . . .

Obviously, we are here dealing with the thought of a man with a wide perspective on capitalism, on socialism and communism, and on interventionism. When he must eventually choose, he is a cautious and qualified interventionist, but an interventionist nevertheless. However, he is an uneasy interventionist. It is as a self-contradictory interventionist that he teaches unacceptable ideas. Tawney's objective to make the consciences of Calvinists uneasy has been affective on Ryskamp.

There are in what Ryskamp writes, naturally, the customary references to the glory of God, the welfare of neighbors, brotherly relations, the "cultural mandate" (about which something later), etc. These we consider the nice facade to dubious principles.

Ryskamp, if he had never come under the influence of Abraham Kuyper, might have come to sounder conclusions. We quote in his own words how he became an adherent of interventionism (our italics):

> At the end of the last century and during the first years of this century, Calvinistic writers in the Netherlands began pointing out the rationalistic and deistic influences in the rise of capitalism. They pointed with no lack of certainty to the impersonality of modern economic life and to the evils that had developed as a consequence. *Dr. Abraham Kuyper and others* called for increasing concern for the lot of the poorer classes and they proposed *measures* almost a half century ago *which some men still regard as socialistic today.* They were, however, following the leadership of John Calvin in their awareness of the needs of the laboring classes. And they openly proclaimed the fact that where and when the operation

> of our free, impersonal economy caused situations to develop that permitted too great inequality among men and that made it impossible for many to find work or homes, *interference was not only necessary but proper.* This was advocated by men who believed in the sovereignty of the several institutions, church, family, state and economic order, in their own sphere, but who believed that, in a world in which life is after all one whole, if the economic institutions set up and maintained by sinful men failed to function properly, the situation might require that *the institution ordained by God to govern and to maintain proper relationships* (*the state or its agencies*) *should interfere.* (Page 187.)

Note what he says: "If the *economic* institutions set up and maintained by sinful men failed to function properly, the situation might require that *the institution ordained by God to govern and to maintain proper relationships* (*the state or its agencies*) *should interfere.* (The italics are ours.)

Ryskamp slips in the word *economic*. The state he says may and should interfere in *economic* institutions. He has just said that the spheres are sovereign, but before he ends the sentence he develops one exception, the *economic*. If plain logic is to govern, it is necessary to show (1) why the field of economics is not really sovereign but can be interfered with by the state, and (2) why contrarily the church, for example, is really sovereign and the state may not interfere. Slipping in the adjective *economic* really puts practical affairs outside of the group of sovereign spheres. In order to justify the exception for economic matters, it is necessary to provide a good reason for the exception. No proof is advanced; the exception is justified because there is a *welfare-shortage,* which presumably a state, which has a charisma from God, can alleviate.

It is necessary to call attention to constant use of question-begging words and terms by Ryskamp in this article. Ryskamp uses expressions as follows: "*failed* to function *properly.*" When do they *fail* to function *properly?* Also, "the institution ordained by God to govern and to maintain *proper* relationships (the state or its agencies) should interfere." What is *proper?* Such use of

adjectives, adverbs and question-begging terms proves nothing. Doctrines should be considered unacceptable on the basis of the number of adjectives, adverbs and question-begging terms in the formulation of the doctrine.

Ryskamp's great hope is not in the proclamation of the law to sinful mankind. That, by the way, is PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM's great hope. His hope, instead, is stayed on the bureaucrats in the government—the "institution ordained by God." His trust is in the charisma of politicians, who want to be re-elected and consequently are looking for votes. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM has no confidence whatever in this charisma. We do not believe it exists. There is no pipe line of inspiration or power directly from God to any bureaucrat. That is not what Paul's proposition means when he says, "The powers that be are of God." But that is exactly the proposition that Christian interventionists, including Ryskamp, basically accept.

We are in this matter far closer to Thomas Jefferson. He wrote* (our italics):

> . . . Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.

Jefferson had lived temporarily in France at the time of the French Revolution and some may attempt to accuse him of holding ideas based on the principles of the French Revolution. However, in his own *Autobiography* he wrote (page 176):

> . . . After I retired from that office [Secretary of State], great and malignant pains were taken by our federal monarchists, and not entirely without effect, to make him [that is, George Washington] view me as a theorist, holding French principles of government, which would lead infallibly to licentiousness and anarchy.

Jefferson rejected that charge.

**Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Adrienne Koch and William Peden, Modern Library, p. 323.

In our view, Kuyper and Ryskamp are closer in theory to the principles of the French Revolution than Jefferson. The interventionism they favor is a step towards a *revolutionary government.**

The Practical Denial Of Total Depravity

Ryskamp writes (our italics):

> . . . a state that does not call a halt to crying evils and does not give direction—*when it is the only agency that can*—is itself a cause of decay.

The premise underlying this is that bureaucrats and politicians are not depraved; they and they only *can* intervene into social relationships. This *can* must mean that they have the insight, judgment, honesty, fairness, courage and devotion to do what is right to "give direction" to society. This is simply the *führer* principle of Hitler. When any government is appraised as Ryskamp appraises government in this connection, the old "divine right of kings" and also the principles of the French Revolution are back in the saddle. We have here again the idea of some charisma from God to a government.

Naturally, Ryskamp immediately hedges. He says, "We certainly do not want an unlimited state because we know from Germany and Russia's experience . . ."

But what does he want? He is, in fact, a nonrealist. His view is that the government must do it, and his assumption is that the government will be good. The government, he clearly assumes, will be good because it has the charisma; but he also mistrusts that charisma.

Ryskamp's Double Standard Of Morality

On page 196 Ryskamp writes:

> Government exists to protect rights, the rights of all individuals and of all classes. This does not mean

*For meaning of term *revolutionary government*, see Guglielmo Ferrero's *The Reconstruction of Europe*, especially Chapters III, IV and XIX.

> that the government may never curb personal action in the use of private property and business. It must interfere when it is necessary to make it possible for others to exercise similar rights. Although this practically compels the government to take positive action in the interest of some people while it takes negative measures to control others, there is no other way out today. Moreover, it is for this purpose of regulating human conduct (curbing injustice), and of using authority to enforce regulation, that the institution of the state has been given to us.

Although cautiously and ambiguously phrased, this paragraph sets up a double standard of morality for government. In regard to *A* the government may pass laws to restrain evil, but in regard to *B* the government may pass laws *to compel him to do* good. In other words, a government may *compel B* to contribute something, that is, it may take something away from *B* which he has lawfully acquired and lawfully holds. This is the *positive* action of government which Ryskamp favors.

That there is not a logical justification for a government to "do good" rather than restricting itself to "restraining evil" is apparent from the obvious conclusion that if the government has restrained evil—that is, has performed that proper function faithfully—there should be no need of anything further. If there is "injustice" in the world because of violation of the commandments of God, then *enforce the Law of God against such evildoers*. Do what Scripture does teach. For it to be necessary for a government to go beyond that and "do good," only two justifications can be given:

> (1) Evil in fact has not been and is not being restrained; or
>
> (2) Freedom is not part of God's plan for the world; charity is compulsory; there is no real right to private property; everything should be communal; a bureaucrat guided by charisma can wisely guide such "do-gooding."

The legislation in Scripture is limited (a) to the restraint of evil and (b) to voluntary "do-gooding." Item (2) in the foregoing is not taught in Scripture. Ryskamp, together with the Social Gospelers, the World Council of Churches, the interventionists, the socialists and the communists, teaches item (2). It is a revolutionary teaching. The language is guarded; the idea is unmistakable.

Scripture curses the use of double weights or of double standards of morality, or different laws for different people, and those who bend justice. Ryskamp would openly have two sets of laws. His statement implies deliberate class legislation.

We do not believe Ryskamp happily and willingly came to this un-Biblical doctrine. The character of his article indicates that he has a sharp mind and technical knowledge of economics. Any sharp mind realizes that interventionism, as always defined, requires that a government may *do more than restrain evil.* The whole purpose of interventionism, as Kuyper clearly indicated, is to go beyond the restraint of evil, or in Ryskamp's words, " . . . practically compels the government to take positive action in the interest of *some* people."

This is not only an evil principle, it is also tyranny; it has an added attribute, the pretense of doing good and of acting for God.

Incidentally, this "positive action" is always something that requires a definite violation of the Ten Commandments. The mask that covers reality in this case is the mask of *legality.* The government which is one of the "powers that be" has the right to pass a law contrary to the Decalogue, because (so it is alleged) it has its "power from God," a charisma.

Any government that is authorized to go beyond the restraint of evil as defined in the Second Table of the Law is a tyranny. Any government that goes beyond the restraint of evil sets a higher goal for itself than God set for Himself.

Erroneous Formulation Of The Law Of Neighborly Love

Ryskamp consistently formulates the Law of Neighborly Love erroneously.

On page 180 he writes:

> . . . the will of God . . . enjoins the individual to serve God and his neighbor as himself.

This is unacceptable. We are to *serve* our neighbor as ourself. This is a radically different idea than loving the neighbor as oneself. The natural facts of life absolutely prevent us from serving our neighbor as much as we serve ourselves. Nobody ever even tries except in the circle of his immediate family. To call this a principle of the Christian religion is to make a fantastic exaggeration of it. Here again we have that popular sanctimoniousness of modern Christianity to *extend* the requirement of brotherly love in such a manner as to make it a hypocritical doctrine and one which is justly contemptible in the judgment of non-Christians.

On page 195 Rsykamp writes that we are "called upon to serve God with [our] wealth . . ." Then he adds:

> This means, according to the second table of the Law, that he [a man] must serve his neighbor as he would be served himself.

Here, too, there is the shift from *love* to *serve,* with the overtone that you must work as hard for your neighbor as you do for yourself—we are all to be *serving* each other!

But then inconsistencies and contradictions are immediately added:

(1) Each man is a *steward,* but his *stewardship* is not openly recognized as in effect nullifying *private property;*

(2) He is to be free;

(3) He is entitled to "profit" (which as we read it is incorrectly defined).

When *stewardship* of property is not identified as a nullifying qualification on the *ownership* of property there is undoubtedly a serious mental confusion somewhere. A baronical lord had a steward. The *steward* owned nothing; he was only a custodian. One of the curious cases of double-talk in religious circles is the

identification of stewardship with ownership in such a manner that the ownership is really nullified by vague and grandiose obligations of stewardship. It would be well to reject all ideas of "stewardship" and stick to the idea that "charity" is the only requirement of Christians. The stewardship idea is that there is a *further* requirement beyond charity. If that is true, how far does it go? Essentially, the idea is that stewardship goes so far beyond charity that it nullifies the validity of ownership.

Ryskamp writes about the men of the Old Testament (our italics):

> Nevertheless, they acted as if the wealth which they had accumulated was *altogether their own,* and in the use of it they acknowledged little of their obligation to their God or to their fellows. (Page 180.)

If a man has honestly and honorably accumulated wealth as presumably Abraham did, is it or is it not "altogether his own"? Abraham had no hesitancy to kill men in order to restore Lot's property and person.

It is not to be disputed that God requires charity of all men, particularly of the rich. But if *stewardship* is defined to mean more than *charity,* we reject the idea of stewardship as being un-Biblical.

Ryskamp has three ideas—charity, stewardship, ownership. Scripture has only two—charity and ownership. It does not slip into the ambiguity of stewardship.

Progressive Calvinism teaches that every man must "love his neighbor as himself." Ryskamp teaches that every man must "serve his neighbor as himself." We deny that there is any scriptural foundation to the proposition that you must "serve the neighbor as you serve yourself." To "serve your neighbor as yourself" means complete voluntary communism in the name of Calvinism.

(to be continued)

Correction

In the August 1956 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 245-249, we ascribed the poverty of the Jerusalem church to the failure to have distinguished between capital and income, and consequently to have been imprudent in consuming capital. The later extreme poverty of this congregation we have ascribed to that error.

We consider the explanation correct as far as it goes. It is not a complete explanation. This congregation was dispersed, persecuted and impoverished by the man later known as the Apostle Paul. See Acts 8:1-3.

Paul, therefore, had an additional reason for trying to raise money internationally to support the congregation at Jerusalem. The other apostles may at the time of the dispute mentioned in Galations 2:1-10 have called Paul's attention to his special responsibility for the Jerusalem situation. fn

"The state is not, as most political scientists would make it, an inanimate thing; it consists of people, human beings, each of whom operates under an inner compulsion to get the most out of life with the least expenditure of labor. They differ from other human beings only in the fact that they have chosen (because they believe it to be easier) the political or predatory means of satisfying their desires, rather than the economic or productive means.

The fiction that the state is an impersonal institution, something society constructs for its own benefit, serves to hide, even from its members, the nature of its composition."

—Frank Chodorov, in *Faith and Freedom,* September, 1956

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